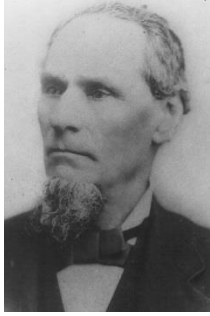


Brief History of the National Park Inn at Longmire Mount Rainier National Park



James Longmire
(1820-1897)

For James Longmire the sight must have been awesome as he approached Mount Rainier on a crisp morning in 1883. Imagine steam vapor billowing about the ferns and evergreens of the ancient forest, revealing the location of mineral hot springs and a place of amazing beauty. Longmire and his friends, George Bayley and P.B. Van Trump, were returning from a successful climb of the mountain. They were camped by the Nisqually River when their horses wandered off. When Longmire went looking for them, he found them in a meadow full of bubbling springs. The discovery

of the hot springs was too good to pass up. He filed a mineral claim for 18 acres, constructed a rudimentary trail and hand crafted a small cabin. His family, who had traveled west on the Oregon Trail with him 30 years earlier, joined him to build and operate the first tourist inn on Mount Rainier. Their rustic accommodations were regularly filled after the first few years of operation.



Longmire Springs Hotel ca. 1895

In the summer of 1890 Longmire opened the Longmire Springs Hotel, a roughly hued two-story building made of split cedar with five small guest rooms upstairs and a lower floor lobby. Several bathhouses were built by digging out springs and sinking tubs into the ground. In addition to the mineral baths, reputed to have curative powers by the local Indians, guests enjoyed mud baths and sulfur plunges.

James Longmire never lived to see the complete fruition of his dreamed development of Longmire Springs. He died in 1897. Two years later Mount Rainier became the fifth national park. The Longmire family faced their first competition in 1906 when the Tacoma Eastern Railroad Company built the National Park Inn, a first class three-story resort hotel that accommodated 60 guests. Undoubtedly the greatest boon to park visitation occurred in 1907 when Mount Rainier became the first national park to allow horseless carriages in the park! Anyone who could afford an automobile could afford the toll, \$5.00 per vehicle per year. By 1910 automobile stages were carrying the tourists in comfort from the railroad terminal in Ashford to Longmire Springs. The number of visitors to the park more than tripled during the period 1910 - 1915. Most were overnight guest. The new Longmire Springs Hotel Company, a corporation who acquired a 5 year lease on all the Longmire family's holdings in 1915, built a comfortable hotel two years later on the Longmire land to compete with the National Park Inn for the influx of visitors.



Original National Park Inn on left, Annex on right
ca. 1925

Steven Mather, the first director of the National Park Service was greatly concerned about the hodge-podge of vendors in the park. There was little control over the quality of the services offered. He met with a group of business men in Tacoma about developing a first-class resort hotel in the park. If they would make the investment, he would give them an exclusive 20 contract for all concession service within the park. They agreed and formed the Rainier National Park Company (RNPC) in 1916. Within a year Paradise Inn was completed. The RNPC obtain a 20 year lease on the Longmire family's business and buildings in 1920. The same year they purchased the National Park Inn from the railroad. The RNPC

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decided to burn down the old Longmire Springs Hotel and move a newly built hotel to a location next to the National Park Inn and called it the annex. Fire completely destroyed the original National Park Inn in 1926. The annex was untouched. The annex was renamed as the National Park Inn. It remains the same building in the same location today as the National Park Inn.

RNPC sold their buildings to the park in 1952, but retained a contract for all business within the park. In 1968 the RNPC was dissolved. Government Services Incorporated obtained the contract to operate the concessions at Mount Rainier National Park in 1973. This same company, now known as Rainier Guest Services, operates the concession activities in the Paradise Inn, Jackson Visitor Center, National Park Inn and Sunrise Lodge today.



National Park Inn today (formerly the Annex)

The National Park Inn underwent renovation in 1936 and 1990. It and the adjoining General Store are on the National Historic Registry and are part the Longmire Historic District. Today, the National Park Inn offers 25 guest rooms, casual dining restaurant, a guest lounge and country store. Open year round, visitors from around the world stay at the National Park Inn to enjoy spectacular views, hiking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing and legendary hospitality.

Longmire has undergone many changes since that chilly morning in 1883. Gone are the bathhouses, wagon trails and antiquated facilities. But the lush vegetation, stunning vistas, abundant wildlife and majestic splendor of Mount Rainier still endures.